
The University of California enters stem cell funding battle

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The University of California has now entered the stem cell funding legal fracas, filing a motion to participate in the pending lawsuit. In a statement, the UC Office of the President said they are the first institution to seek to intervene in the lawsuit:

“ The recent U.S. District Court preliminary injunction blocking federally funded human embryonic stem cell (hESC) research threatens ongoing potential life-saving research and undermines the time-honored system of peer-reviewed science. CIRM funds stem cell research projects at all ten UC system campuses (you can look up those awards on our online funding chart). In their blog, Nature breaks down the impact of the funding battle on just two of the UC schools:

“ The University of California, Los Angeles receives a total of 16 NIH grants from nine different NIH institutes involving work on human embryonic stem cells; those grants are worth a total of \$8.7 million and provide full-time support for 46.5 researchers and staff. The University of California, San Diego, meanwhile, receives 14 NIH grants from five NIH institutes for human embryonic stem cell work, worth \$7 million and employing 17.17 researchers and staff.

CIRM grantee at UC San Francisco Arnold Kriegstein wrote a statement in support of the motion. Kriegstein is director of the Eli and Edythe Broad Center for Regeneration Medicine and Stem Cell Research at UC San Francisco. In his statement, he says that although much of the human embryonic stem cell research taking place in California is funded by CIRM, the injunction has an impact that is disproportionate to the amount of funding received.

“ "The preliminary injunction has an impact on dozens of researchers and students, affecting programs across the UC campuses and across departments... Any loss of funding for the federal [human embryonic stem cell] projects will result in a loss of hours for these employees."

Kriegstein specifically cites a training program that includes 88 PhD and MD students being trained at UCSF, and which has had its funding discontinued due to the preliminary injunction issued Aug. 23.

The court has ordered both the plaintiffs and defendants in the case to file a response to the UC motion by Thursday, September 23.

A.A.

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